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1 September 2000

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SUBJECT: Futenma Relocation Plodding Along [REDACTED]

1. Administration, Okinawan prefectural, and local municipal officials last month began deliberating specific recommendations for relocating Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, but US diplomats say they have yet to address the major impediments.

- Okinawan Governor Inamine and Nago Mayor Kishimoto—whose district will host the new base—openly support a 15-year time limit on US access to the replacement facility, prompting the local press to speculate that they will not cooperate otherwise.
- Foreign Minister Kono will raise the time limit with senior US leaders at the two-plus-two meeting, according to a government spokesman, though we do not know how strongly he will pursue the matter. [REDACTED]

2. Competing concepts for the type and location of a new facility will make the decision even more difficult. At least three industrial consortiums—each advocating different construction methods—are vying for contracts and lobbying national and local leaders, who are divided on the issue.

- The Okinawan Prefectural Government continues to favor a land-based, joint-use facility near Camp Schwab that would benefit local construction firms and easily convert to a commercial airport. Mayor Kishimoto favors a less intrusive sea-based facility or coastal landfill to address local concerns about safety and pollution.
- On a positive note, the councils studying the move have adopted 12 projects worth about \$24 million that are incentives for local cooperation on bases relocation. They will be targeted in the current fiscal year to municipalities that will host the new base, according to press reports, including a

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plan to promote information-technology-related businesses and other infrastructure development projects on the east coast of Okinawa. []

3. Officials are working to ensure transparency by holding open meetings and releasing committee reports.

- Japanese officials have told US diplomats that they intend to finish consultations as soon as possible, but they will probably not issue formal recommendations until sometime near the unofficial 31 March 2001 deadline. []

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